

## **The Importance and Need for Family and Consumer Sciences Programs in Today's Schools**

### **Public Testimony**

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Good afternoon! My name is Carolyn Reynolds; and I presently serve as the Executive Director of the New Jersey Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (NJAFCS); the Coordinator of Curriculum Connections, the professional development component of NJAFCS established in the early 1980s for family and consumer sciences educators; and the Consultant for Educators of Family and Consumer Sciences of New Jersey (EFACS-NJ) which became a co-sponsor of Curriculum Connections in the late 1980s. Both, NJAFCS and EFACS-NJ, are affiliated with their state and national associations and have members which have served or are serving as officers, committee chairpersons and representatives which advocate for family and consumer sciences education. In December 2008, I will complete my term as one of nine (9) representatives to the National Coalition for Family and Consumer Sciences Education.

Today, I would like to speak with you concerning the importance and need for family and consumer sciences (FCS) education courses/programs in our schools in New Jersey. For many persons, the perception of family and consumer sciences education is a program which highlights only cooking and sewing learning experiences, activities and/or projects or that the students should be learning everything at home that is needed to function as individuals in their families, at school, in their communities, at their workplaces and in the world.

In actuality, family and consumer sciences education courses/programs in New Jersey schools empower individuals to manage challenges of living and working in a diverse global society because the focus of family and consumer sciences education is on families, work and their interrelationships. Our New Jersey schools promote the development of individuals through the study of one or more of the 16 content areas listed in the National Standards for Family and Consumer Sciences Education. Although names of FCS courses/programs in New Jersey schools vary, some of the 16 areas of FCS content addressed are: human development; interpersonal relationships; family; parenting; consumer and family resources; food science, dietetics & nutrition; housing, interior & furnishings; textiles, fashion & apparel; education & early childhood; food production & services; and hospitality, tourism & services.

Through the current Standard 9 of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (Career Education and Consumer, Family and Life Skills), New Jersey family and consumer sciences education courses/programs promote critical thinking, self management, interpersonal communication, character development and ethics, consumer and personal finance, safety, career awareness and planning and employability skills. How? One example is: students develop skills in consumer and personal finance (consumer and family resources) through their participation in FCS courses such as parenting education, human development/child development, nutrition, food preparation, clothing construction and maintenance, housing and home furnishings, etc. In each of these courses, students identify the needs and wants and their



differences which have an impact on their finances. In today's world, we are hearing how families are facing economic crisis. Why? Have their wants become more important than their needs? Does this then impact their family life? Have they used critical thinking and good decision making skills to meet their needs and wants?

Another example of how FCS courses/programs are meet the needs of individuals and families is the development and implementation of food science, nutrition and food preparation learning experiences. We know that today's students have a variety of illnesses which can be triggered through the preparation and consumption of food. They include but are not limited to: diabetes; high blood pressure; eating disorders; obesity; allergies; etc. Although the FCS teacher is not prescribing what a student should do in any of these personal health situations, they are providing "correct nutritional information" which the student and their families can utilize in their food preparation and consumption decisions.

As you read the newspapers, watch television programs and listen to "talk" radio, you become aware of the abuse issues in today's society. Through courses in interpersonal relationships, parenting, and child development/human development, students develop critical thinking and decision making skills which are invaluable to them in today's society and the future world in which they will live.

In addition, many FCS programs provide additional leadership opportunities through a variety of activities and projects in the career and technical student organization, FCCLA (Family, Career and Community Leaders of America.) Today, you have seen or will see FCCLA State Officers using those leadership skills in discussing why they think that family and consumer sciences and the related CTSO (FCCLA) are an important course/program and organization in their school.

Although today, I have only skimmed the surface of what family and consumer sciences education does and can do for society, I encourage you to continue supporting this program area as part of the education program in New Jersey schools. This can be done by continuing to have the program included in one of the required areas (career education and consumer, family and life skills) for high school graduation.

You are also encouraged to go to the web site, National Coalition for Family and Consumer Sciences Education, to review additional materials on Family and Consumer Sciences Education.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you about a very important program area in our New Jersey public schools.